

Bjelke-Petersen and Low family papers

Accession number 32950

Date 1879- 2017

Author / Creator

[Bjelke-Petersen, Florence, Lady, 1920-2017.](#)

[Bjelke-Petersen, Joh, Sir, 1911-2005.](#)

Abstract This collection contains the family papers of the Low family, the maternal ancestors of Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen and the photographs of the Bjelke-Petersen family, particularly the immediate family of Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen. Also included is the correspondence between then Florence Gilmour and Joh Bjelke-Petersen before their marriage in 1952 and photographs of their subsequent children and grandchildren.

Scope and content Further material included in the collection relates to Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen and their children and grandchildren and to their respective political careers. This material is largely made up of correspondence, photographs and audio-visual material.

Description 6 boxes of photographs, correspondence, papers and audio visual material

Administrative / Biographical history Florence Gilmour and Joh Bjelke-Petersen married in May of 1952 and Florence moved to Bethany. They had four children Margaret (Meg) born 1953, John born 1956, Helen born 1958 and Ruth born 1960. Joh Bjelke-Petersen became Premier of Queensland in 1967 and remained so until 1987. Florence became a Senator for Queensland in 1981 and remained so until 1993. When Joh Bjelke-Petersen was knighted in 1984 the couple became Sir and Lady Bjelke-Petersen, colloquially Sir Joh and Lady Flo.

Access restrictions Unrestricted access.

Copyright status Multiple copyright statuses.

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Preferred citation

32950, Bjelke-Petersen and Low family papers, John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland

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Series 1: Gilmour and Low family papers (1879-1952)

Series number 1

Series title Gilmour and Low family papers

Date 1879-1952

Scope and content

The Gilmour and Low families are Lady Florence Bjelke-Petersen's paternal and maternal ancestors, respectively. Much of the material in this series relates to 'Granny Low' and two of her children who went to World War One, Harold and Arthur. 'Granny Low' was Eliza Alice Low (nee Ensor) who was born in England and emigrated to Australia with her husband Edwin Low in 1886. They had 6 children, one of whom was Florence Mabel Low. Florence Mabel Low married James Pollock Gilmour and the couple had two children Florence Isabel and Margaret. Florence Isabel Gilmour married Joh Bjelke-Petersen in 1952 and when Joh received his Knighthood in 1984 she became titled Lady Bjelke-Petersen, colloquially known as 'Lady Flo'.

Description

Description 12 items

Access

Copyright status In copyright

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Items in this series:

Eliza Alice Low papers (1879-1942)

Unit ID 32950/1

Date 1879-1942

Scope and content

- Correspondence 1910-1942 – from grandchildren, two letters appear to be from Eliza Low from Diamantina Hospital in Dalby

Marriage certificate

- Newspaper clippings
- Government Savings Bank deposit book belonging to Eliza and Edwin Low
- Greeting cards
- Photographs

Also included is a print out of items found to have been collected and saved by 'Granny Low' (as she was referred to by Florence) titled 'Granny Low's Treasures'., which add includes biographical information about the Low family and provides some context of the items included in this collection.

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 3944

Other

Biographical history

Eliza Alice Low nee Ensor is Florence Bjelke Petersen's maternal grandmother. She was born in 1856 in England and died in 1943.

Portrait of Eliza Alice Low (1930-1940?)

Unit ID 32950/2

Date 1930-1940?

Scope and content

One mounted portrait photograph of Eliza Alice Low, nee Ensor (1856-1943)

Description

Description 1 portrait photograph

36 x 27 cm

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23685 O/S

Lace collar and handkerchief (1882)

Unit ID 32950/3

Date 1882

Scope and content

One lace collar, provenance unknown One lace handkerchief embroidered 28th October, 1882' most likely belonging to Eliza Alice Low. Since the date embroidered on the handkerchief is the date of Eliza Alice and Edwin Low's marriage and as the lace collar is of a similar age to the handkerchief it is possible both of these items belonged to Eliza Alice Low.

Description

Description 1 collar 1 handkerchief

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23685 O/S

Edwin Low papers (1860-1910)

Unit ID 32950/4

Date 1860-1910

Scope and content

Edwin Low was husband to Eliza Alice Low and Florence Bjelke-Petersen's maternal grandfather. Items include:

- Photographs
- Copy of book 'Messages of Love for the sick and suffering with verses by Rose Boudillon' with an inscription to Edwin Low and handwritten annotations throughout
- Greeting cards
- Confirmation certificate, Brisbane 1899
- In memoriam of Edwin Low 1910

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 3944

Edwin Low with daughter Florence Mabel (1900?)

Unit ID 32950/5

Date 1900?

Scope and content

One mounted portrait photograph of Edwin Low with daughter Florence Mabel as a girl.

Description

Description 1 portrait photograph

51 x 40 cm

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23685 O/S

Arthur Edwin Low papers (1890-1919)

Unit ID 32950/6

Date 1890-1919

Scope and content

Arthur Edwin Low is the son of Eliza Alice and Edwin Low, bother to Florence Mabel. Items include:

- Postcards and correspondence from Arthur addressed to 'Alice'
- Correspondence regarding his death of influenza in England immediately after the end of the first World War
- Photographs of grave in England
- Mothers and Widows badge and a service medal
- Two coins found on the battlefield by Arthur Low
- Photograph of Arthur as child (4 years old) and two other boys, Walter and Sydney, 1890 in England

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 3944

'Honour the Brave' certificate (1919)

Unit ID 32950/7

Date 1919

Scope and content

One mounted illustrated certificate issued to the relatives of Arthur E. Low by the town of Ithaca honouring his service in the First World war, printed by D. W. Paterson Co. Pty. Ltd.

Description

Description 1 certificate

47 x 29 cm

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23685 O/S

Harold Low papers (between 1915-1935?)

Unit ID 32950/8

Date between 1915-1935?

Scope and content

Harold Low is the son of Eliza Alice and Edwin Low, both to Florence Mabel. Items include:

- Correspondence including on concertinaed letter cards
- Postcards 1915? -1919
- Telegrams pertaining to Harold Low when he was injured during the First World War
- Church News clipping, Ithaca parish, 1935
- A book of unused postcards

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 3944

Walter Low papers (1915-1932)

Unit ID 32950/9

Date 1915-1932

Scope and content

Walter Low is possibly the nephew of Eliza Alice Low. He resided in England. Items include:

- Photographs of Walter, one in Royal Naval Air Service uniform
- Correspondence - mostly addressed to 'Aunt Alice' in Brisbane
- Newspaper clippings

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX 3944

Gilmour family photographs and papers (1882-1940?)

Unit ID 32950/10

Date 1882-1940?

Scope and content

This is a small collection of items pertaining to the Gilmour family. Florence Mabel Low married James Pollock Gilmour in 1920. They had two children, Florence and Margaret. Information held in this item is as follows:

- Small plaque (previously attached to something larger) reads "presented to Mr. David Gilmour by the Deacons Court of Busby Free Church and a few friends as a token of their esteem on his leaving Australia", 25th Sept 1882. David Gilmour was Florence Bjelke-Petersen's paternal grandfather.
- Photographs, largely mounted and unidentified but part of Gilmour family
- Memorial card for David Gilmour
- Florence Mabel Gilmour's driver's licence
- Photographs of Florence Mabel Gilmour

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX 3944

Florence Bjelke-Petersen papers (1929-1952)

Unit ID 32950/11

Date 1929-1952

Scope and content

This item holds information pertaining to Florence Bjelke-Petersen's (nee Gilmour) childhood, young adulthood and life before her marriage to Joh Bjelke-Petersen including:

- Girls order of the covenant folk dancing competition, 1940?
- Class photograph of students in New Farm 1929, including Florence
- Photographs of Florence's family and early adult life
- Florence's schooling papers – offer of scholarship, scholars report from Brisbane Girls Grammar
- Greeting cards
- Newspaper clipping of Youth Council Annual Dinner

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 4246

George Lewis Chilman service medals (1914-1918; 1939-1945)

Unit ID 32950/12

Date 1914-1918; 1939-1945

Scope and content

Australian service medals for the First and Second World Wars, belonging to George Lewis Chilman once contained in a box addressed to Mrs J. E. Chilman, c/o Messers McMaster, Montgomery & Co, 133 Richmons St, West Toronto Canada. Also written on the box "A18173, G.L. Chilman" The medals from the First World War are marked with the recipient's name and his unit, and relate to Chilman's service with the South African Infantry 5th Battalion, part of the South African Overseas Expeditionary Force formed by the South African Government as part of its contribution to the British war effort. The medals from the Second World War relate to Chilman's service with the Australian Military Forces, District Accounts Office, #Q89465. When George enlisted for service in 1941, he named Florence Gilmour, of New Farm as his next of kin (later Florence Bjelke-Peterson) who was his first cousin. Prior to the war, Chilman was a representative of the Queensland Chamber of Manufacturers, promoting Queensland trade to Pacific and South East Asian nations.

Description

Description 8 medals

Locate OMBOX Box 4246

Series 2: Bjelke-Petersen family photographs (between 1900-1960?)

Series number 2

Series title Bjelke-Petersen family photographs

Date between 1900-1960?

Scope and content

The Bjelke-Petersen family name was born when George Petersen, an ambitious and recently prosperous young man, established himself and his wife in Bjelke Avenue on the outskirts of Copenhagen and changed their name to Bjelke-Petersen. The family had five children; Carl, Christian, Marie, Harald and Johannes. The Bjelke-Petersen family emigrated to Tasmania from Denmark when Carl Bjelke-Petersen (1870-1954), who was known to the family as George, was 21. He became a Lutheran pastor and was posted to New Zealand. He was then transferred to Queensland where he met Maren Poulsen (1881-1970), whose family had also emigrated from Denmark. He family emigrated when she was seven and had settled with other Scandinavian emigrants in the South Burnett region of Queensland. George (Carl) was again posted to New Zealand where Maren joined him and they married. Their first two children, Christian and Johannes, were born in Dannevirke in the North Island of New Zealand but the family moved back to Australia when Johannes (Joh) was two years old and established the property 'Bethany' near Kingaroy. Agneta (Neta) was born soon after.

Description

Description 0 photographs

Items in this series:

Bjelke-Petersen family photograph album (between 1900 -1960?)

Unit ID 32950/13

Date between 1900 -1960?

Scope and content

Photograph album of Carl and Maren's generation of the Bjelke-Petersen family taken mostly during their tenure of the family property 'Bethany' in Kingaroy. The subjects of photographs in this album include:

- Maren before her marriage
- House the Bjelke-Petersen family lived in New Zealand
- Christian, Joh and Neta as children at Bethany, helping and playing on the farm
- Neta as a child with various animals
- Joh as a young adult using farm machinery
- Christian's funeral
- Trips to the Bunya Mountains in the sunshine coast hinterland
- Taabinga Village School Jubilee, 1947

This photograph album includes a list which describes some of the photographs in the album however any order relative to this list was lost before the items were received at State Library. Every attempt has been made to order the photographs chronologically.

Description

Description 1 photograph album

Locate OMOSBOX Box 13406 O/S

Photographs of the Bjelke-Petersen family and extended family. (between 1900-1947?)

Unit ID 32950/14

Date between 1900-1947?

Scope and content

One folder of mostly mounted portraits and postcard family photographs of George (Carl) and Maren's generation of the Bjelke-Petersen family and extended family. Features a number of photos of Marie Bjelke-Petersen, who was a famous romance writer and resided in Tasmania

but visited the Queensland Bjelke-Petersen family with some regularity. Photographs feature:

- Group photographs of extended family and friends at Bethany
- George (Carl) and brother Christian Bjelke-Petersen and meeting the Prince of Wales
- Extended Bjelke-Petersen and Poulsen families
- Portrait photo of young Joh Bjelke-Petersen
- Maren Poulsen's leaving celebrations in Laidley before leaving to marry George (Carl) Bjelke-Petersen in New Zealand
- Marie Bjelke-Petersen on trips to Queensland and at her home in Tasmania
- Bjelke-Petersen family in a boat on a river on holiday in Rotorua, New Zealand 1913

Description

Description 0 photographs

Locate OMBOX Box 4578 O/S

Bjelke-Petersen family friends and distant relations photographs (between 1900 -1960?)

Unit ID 32950/15

Date between 1900 -1960?

Scope and content

One folder of photographs of Bjelke-Petersen family friends and distant relations, mainly from the Danish community in Laidley where Maren Bjelke-Petersen (nee Poulsen) family lived after their emigration from Denmark.

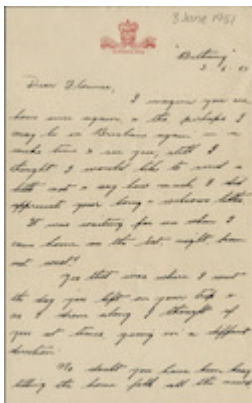
- Christen Skoufoi driving to Laidley in a horse-drawn vehicle
- Portrait photograph of two couples; Mr and Mrs Peter Hansen, Mr and Mrs Niels (?) Thomas Jensen
- Hansen Family group with Pastor Prenzler
- Swensden family
- Shellback family
- Petersen family (not related to the Bjelke-Petersen family)
- Inge Marie Jensen was a childhood friend of Maren's from Laidley after the Poulsen family emigrated from Denmark (married Peter Hansen)

Description

Description 0 photographs

Locate OMOSBOX Box 4578 O/S

Series 3: Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen correspondence (1950-1952)



Series number 3

Series title Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen correspondence

Date 1950-1952

Scope and content

Florence Isabel Gilmour and Joh Bjelke-Petersen met in 1951. Florence was a typist and secretary for the Queensland Commissioner of the Main Roads and Joh was the Member for Barambah for the Country Party and ran a business with his sister Neta selling farming equipment and using heavy machinery to clear land and creating pasture all over Queensland. They married in May of 1952 and Florence moved to Bethany. One folder of correspondence between Joh Bjelke-Petersen and then Florence Gilmour in the year before their marriage during which time they got engaged. During this time Joh travelled both in aid of his business but also for work as Member of the Queensland Parliament for the seat of Nanango. There are some letters written outside this time frame and some letters that are undated. Every attempt has been made to insert undated letters into a chronological order. Items 32950/16 - 32950/59

Author / Creator

Bjelke-Petersen, Florence, Lady, 1920-2017.

Bjelke-Petersen, Joh, Sir, 1911-2005.

Description

Description 43 letters

Additional format Digital copies available

System of arrangement Chronological

Locate OMBOX Box 4246

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

(1 digital)

Series 4: Bjelke-Petersen family photographs (between 1953-2005?)

Series number 4

Series title Bjelke-Petersen family photographs

Date between 1953-2005?

Scope and content

Florence Gilmour and Joh Bjelke-Petersen married in May of 1952 and Florence moved to Bethany. They had four children Margaret (Meg) born 1953, John born 1956, Helen born 1958 and Ruth born 1960. Joh Bjelke-Petersen became Premier of Queensland in 1967. Florence took care of their home and farm, Bethany, and their children while Joh governed. When Joh became premier Florence became his proxy at many community events usually attended by the local member. The family appear to have been involved in Joh's campaigns for premier. Florence became a Senator for Queensland in 1981 and remained so until 1993. When Joh Bjelke-Petersen was knighted in 1984 the couple became Sir and Lady Bjelke-Petersen, colloquially Sir Joh and Lady Flo.

Description

Description 0 items

Items in this series:

Photographs (between 1952-2005?)



Unit ID 32950/60

Date between 1952-2005?

Scope and content

One folder of photographs of Joh and Florence Bjelke-Petersen and their family beginning when Joh and Florence married in 1952. The photographs are of Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen family and also political career photographs and include:

- Florence and Joh's wedding
- Bjelke-Petersen children growing up
- Joh on official trips, at political meetings
- Florence swearing in as a Senator
- Florence and Margaret on holidays later in life
- Group portraits of Bjelke-Petersen children and their children

Many photographs in are professionally taken and some appear to be affiliated with newspapers. These would appear to be used for campaigns and publicity.

Description

Description 1 folder

Additional format Digital copy available for selected item

Locate OMBOX Box 4578 O/S

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

'The little bush school' hand-created story (1960)

Unit ID 32950/61

Date 1960

Scope and content

One hand-created story called 'The Little Bush School' written and illustrated for Margaret 'Meg' Bjelke-Petersen by her Aunt Neta Stiller (nee Bjelke-Petersen) in 1960.

Description

Description 1 sketch book

Locate OMBOX Box 4578 O/S

(1 digital)

Series 5: Bjelke-Petersen family audio visual material (between 1953-2005?)

Series number 5

Series title Bjelke-Petersen family audio visual material

Date between 1953-2005?

Scope and content

Florence Gilmour and Joh Bjelke-Petersen married in May of 1952 and Florence moved to Bethany. They had four children Margaret (Meg) born 1953, John born 1956, Helen born 1958 and Ruth born 1960. Joh Bjelke-Petersen became Premier of Queensland in 1967. Florence took care of their home and farm, Bethany, and their children while Joh governed. When Joh became premier Florence became his proxy at many community events usually attended by the local member. The family appear to have been involved in Joh's campaigns for premier. Florence became a Senator for Queensland in 1981 and remained so until 1993. When Joh Bjelke-Petersen was knighted in 1984 the couple became Sir and Lady Bjelke-Petersen, colloquially Sir Joh and Lady Flo.

Description

Description 0 items

Items in this series:

Audio message to Ruth, Helen and John Bjelke-Petersen (between 1960 and 1970?)

Unit ID 32950/62

Date between 1960 and 1970?

Scope and content

Audio recording of Maren Bjelke-Petersen (nee. Poulsen) talking to her grandchildren Ruth, Helen and John Bjelke-Petersen. Maren talks of her life in different periods; early childhood in Denmark, life in Laidley after the Poulsen family emigrated.

Description

Description 1 audio reel tape

Additional format Digital copy available

Locate OMBOX Box 23507 O/S

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

Audio message to 'Marg' Bjelke-Petersen (between 1960 and 1970?)

Unit ID 32950/63

Date between 1960 and 1970?

Scope and content

Audio recording of Maren Bjelke-Petersen (nee. Poulsen) talking to Margaret Bjelke-Petersen, known now as 'Meg'. Maren talks of her wedding day.

Description

Description 1 audio reel tape

Additional format Digital copy available

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23507 O/S

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

Bethany home movie (Undated)

Unit ID 32950/64

Date Undated

Scope and content

Home movie labelled 'A.Stiller, "Bethany", Kingaroy'.

Description

Description 1 film

Home movie (Undated)

Unit ID 32950/65

Date Undated

Scope and content

Unidentified 16 mm film reel in box addressed to J. Bjelke-Petersen in Kingaroy.

Description

Description 1 film reel

16mm

Home movie (Undated)

Unit ID 32950/66

Date Undated

Scope and content

Unidentified 16 mm film reel in box addressed to J. Bjelke-Petersen c/o Kodak in Queen Street, Brisbane.

Description

Description 1 film reel
16mm

(2 digital)

Series 6: Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen political material (between 1953 and 1990?)

Series number 6

Series title Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen political material

Date between 1953 and 1990?

Scope and content

Joh Bjelke-Petersen won the seat of Nanango in 1947 for the Country party and would hold that seat, renamed Barambah in 1950, for the next 40 years. He and Florence Gilmour married in 1952. Florence took care of their home and farm, Bethany, and their children while Joh governed. When Joh became premier Florence became his proxy at many community events usually attended by the local member. Joh became minister for works and housing in 1963, during that time serving as acting minister for education, police, Aboriginal and Island Affairs, local government and conservation and labour and industry. He became County Party leader and Premier 5 years later, serving as Premier until 1987. Florence became a Senator for Queensland in 1981 and remained so until 1993.

Description

Description 0 items

Items in this series:

Florence Bjelke-Petersen political ephemera (1981-1993)

Unit ID 32950/67

Date 1981-1993

Scope and content

One folder of ephemera related to Florence Bjelke-Petersen's time as senator. Folder includes:

- postcard with Pumpkin scone recipe
- Correspondence with attached clipping from Country Youth Crusade of Australia Inc. to Mrs. Bjelke Petersen.
- Pencil sketch of Florence – unknown artist
- Senator Florence Bjelke-Petersen business cards

Description

Description 1 folder

Locate OMBOX Box 4246

Florence Bjelke-Petersen address to the Tansey CWA (1971)

Unit ID 32950/68

Date 1971

Scope and content

Audio recording of Mrs Florence Bjelke-Petersen addressing the Tansey branch of the Queensland Country Women's Association.

Description

Description 1 audio tape reel

Additional format Digital copy available

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23507 O/S

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

Joh Bjelke-Petersen public address (1968)

Unit ID 32950/69

Date 1968

Scope and content

Audio recording of Joh Bjelke-Petersen as the Minister for Public Works and Housing at the official opening of a government building.

Description

Description 1 audio tape reel

Additional format Digital copy available

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23507 O/S

[View the items](#)

[View the item](#)

Slides (Between 1960 -1979?)

Unit ID 32950/70

Date Between 1960 -1979?

Scope and content

34 slides. The cardboard mounted slides are of an official visit to by Joh Bjelke-Petersen to the Torres Strait. Images include a government vessel, landscapes of islands and of a public dance ceremony. The glass slides, some of which are damaged, are of a trip (either business or official government duty) to Western Queensland, possibly Diamantina. There are images of a shire council office and other rural buildings. Some images have been taken from a small plane.

Description

Description 34 colour slides

Locate OMBOX Box 4246

Shield of the Torres Strait (1973)

Unit ID 32950/71

Date 1973

Scope and content

Carved wooden artifact - most likely a shield - of the Torres Strait Island people presented to

Joh Bjelke-Petersen in 1973 in recognition of his support to keep the Torres Strait Islands a part of Queensland during Australian border negotiations with Papua New Guinea when they gained independence. Feathers adorn each end, the wood has been painted an earthy red and is patterned with carvings across both sides.

Description

Description 1 shields

75 cm long and 7 cm wide

Locate OMOSBOX Box 23850 O/S

Films (between 1952-1987?)

Unit ID 32950/72

Date between 1952-1987?

Scope and content

14 8mm films probably taken when Joh Bjelke-Petersen served in public office of Florence and Joh Bjelke-Petersen travels through Queensland as Government representatives.

Description

Description 14 film reels (colour)

8 mm

(2 digital)